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Inventory for Manuscript Collection MS-41

Captain Jason Collins
Inclusive dates 1836-1901
Bulk dates – 1854 to 1882

by
Tracy Lamaestra
March 2012

Shelf feet: .25
Number of boxes: 1
Accession 78.57, 97.49

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Abstract

Collins, Jason, *Captain* (b 1817-d 1907)

Papers, 1836-1901

Bulk dates: 1854 to 1882

1 Box

Steamboat captain, owner and engineer from Gardiner, Maine, the best-known of Kennebec River steamboat men.

Papers relating to various vessels including the *America* (Sidewheel steamer), *Della Collins* (Sternwheel steamer), *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Emeline* (Sidewheel steamer), *Governor* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Henry S. Sanford* (Ship), *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Neptune* (Screw steamer), *New England* (Sidewheel steamer), *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) and *Surprise* (Sidewheel steamer). Includes correspondence, bills of sale, official number assignment, contract, ship plan, crew wages, accident reports, vessel and route lists, by laws, ephemera, quit claim deed and miscellaneous. The collection is grouped: Series I. Personal Correspondence, Series II. Vessel Papers, and Series III. Miscellaneous.

Donated by Charles E. Burden, August 1978. Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr., May 1997.

MS-41, Accession Nos. 78.57, 78.57.15, 78.57.43, 97.49.

Related material in repository, MS 339

Finding aid in repository, folder level control.

Added Entries—persons

Blanchard, Samuel, *Captain*

Collins, Jason, *Captain*

Collins, Wesley

Dermott, R. S.

Wakeman, Edgar, *Captain*

Young, E. S., *Captain*

Added entries—corporate bodies (including vessels)

America (Sidewheel steamer)

Della Collins (Sternwheel steamer)

East Boston (Ferry)

Eastern Queen (Sidewheel steamer)

Emeline (Sidewheel steamer), ex. *Nantasket*

Governor (Sidewheel steamer, passenger)

Henry S. Sanford (Ship)

Huntress (Sidewheel steamer)

Joseph Whitney (Sidewheel steamer)

Kennebec (Sidewheel steamer)

Kennebec Steamboat Company

Neptune (Screw steamer)

New England (Sidewheel steamer)

Sagadahoc (Sidewheel steamer)

Star of the East (Sidewheel steamer)

Surprise (Sidewheel steamer)

Added entries—key terms

Collisions at Sea
Ephemera [not LC]
Passes (Transportation)
Ship captains
Steam boats
Steamboat lines
Wages

Acquisition

Charles E. Burden donated the papers of Captain Jason Collins on August 8, 1978, accession no. 78.57. Additional papers were given as a gift from Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. on May 12, 1997, accession no. 97.49.

Provenance

There is no known provenance for accession no 78.57. Accession no. 97.49 was purchased at auction from the Gardiner Library in Augusta, Maine by Mr. Shettleworth.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on the use of these materials for study or research.

Physical Condition

The majority of the papers are in good condition. Some manuscripts are soiled and discolored. Others have folds, creases and tears. Those with heavier crease lines will require flattening with a tacking iron at low to medium heat. A number of manuscripts have tears along creases. These can be easily repaired with thin, transparent document repair tape.

Historical Notes

Kennebec Steamship Company

The Kennebec and Boston Steam Navigation Company (a stock company) was formed in Gardiner, 1835-1836. The steamer the *New England* (Sidewheel steamer) was purchased by them to run from Gardiner to Boston. Captain Kimball was shipmaster of the *New England* (Sidewheel steamer) while young Captain Jason Collins was the fireman. This Gardiner to Boston course became known as the Kennebec to Boston river run. Passengers began to be transported along this route in 1841.

The Kennebec and Boston Steamboat Company was formed by Gardiner and Hallowell residents in 1857. Captain Collins was part owner and director of the Kennebec Steamboat Company. The *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) was their first steamer. Captain Collins ran the *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) and the *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) for the company. Steamboats traveled to and from Bath, Richmond, Gardiner, Augusta, Portland, Hallowell and Boston. Passengers voyaged on vessels such as the *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Della Collins* (Sternwheel steamer), *Governor* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) and *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger).

Competition became fierce due to the popularity and profit incurred by steamboat travels. The Bath Company vessels *Daniel Webster* (Sidewheel steamer) and *Eastern City* (Sidewheel steamer) rivaled the Kennebec Steamship Company in 1866 running a daily line to Boston with reduced fares. Countless people traveled to Boston aboard these vessels as a result. The Kennebec Company held its own via the *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer) and *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer) forcing the Bath Company to withdraw. The Kennebec Steamboat Company took over steamboat travel along this route for thirty-seven years. The *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) was the only boat on the Kennebec route from 1870 to 1889 making two trips weekly. In 1889, the *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) was added to the line making two trips weekly as well. The *Sagadahoc* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) ex. *Star of the East* and *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) provided service in the 1890s. The two steamers made ninety-six round trips from Boston to Gardiner in 1892. The Kennebec Steamboat Company sold out to the Eastern Steamship Company in 1901.

Reference

1. "Centennial of Steamboating on the Kennebec—Boston Fare Once 25 Cents." *Lewiston Journal.* Maine Maritime Museum. Collection 54. Box 84. Steamboat Lines.
2. http://www.lighthouse.cc/perkins/history.html. 7 March 2012.
3. http://www.augustamaine.gov/
4. Kingsbury, Henry D. and Simeon L. Deyo, eds. *Illustrated History of Kennebec County Maine: 1625-1799-1892. New* York: H. W. Blake and Company, 1892.
5. *The Centennial of Gardiner: An Account of the Exercises at the Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town, June 25, 1903*. Gardiner, Maine: 1903.

Biographical Notes

Captain Jason Collins was born on February 22, 1817 in Gardiner, Maine to James and Betsey E. Tyler. He married Hannah Louisa (b. 1821, daughter of Nathaniel Kinneston) in Maine. They had children Anna Augusta (b. abt 1849), Blanche (b. 1854), James E. (b. abt 1858), Della H. (1859), Eugenia (b. 1860) and Wallace (b.1860).

Captain Collins was hired as a cook at the age of fourteen on the *Hope* (Schooner) by Captain John Collins his uncle. He voyaged to Mexico and South American ports on the *Adventure* (Schooner) the following year as sailor with his Uncle. Captain Collins sailed on the

Corinthian (Brig) for Captain Sampson in the "coastwise trade" (Kingsbury, 233). Moreover, he worked aboard the *Powhattan* (Ship), Europe bound, for Captain Thompson.

At the age of nineteen, Captain Collins was hired as a fireman on the *New England* (Sidewheel steamer). He worked in the engineer's department on this vessel as well. The *New England* (Sidewheel steamer) traveled from Gardiner to Portland to Boston. Later Captain Collins became assistant engineer of the *Huntress* (Sidewheel steamer) and was promoted to chief engineer four years later.

In 1849, he was chief engineer on the *Independence* (Sidewheel steamer) for Commodore Vanderbilt. The *Independence* (Sidewheel steamer) voyaged from New York to San Francisco with a crew of sixty officers and men. Later the *Independence* (Sidewheel steamer) traveled from San Francisco to Nicaragua with passengers. On February 16, 1853 the *Independence* (Sidewheel steamer) ran into a coral reef near California. Not only did the vessel start leaking, but she caught fire. Captain Jason Collins stated,

> *"The men from Maine, forty in number, were all saved; but, of the five hundred passengers, only two hundred and twenty-five escaped with their lives."* (Centennial, 74)

Captain Collins was assigned first engineer on Atlantic Coast steamers. In 1861, he was in command of the *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer). The *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer) was chartered by the government for the Burnside Expedition to Hatteras. The 24th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment right wing and Gilmore's Band voyaged from New York to Annapolis on this vessel. The regiments disembarked while the 4th R. I. Volunteer regiment boarded and then sailed on to Hatteras. The *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer) was the "flagship" of the first division and followed gunboats (Centennial, 76). This vessel transported troops, even during battles.

Captain Collins returned to Boston on the *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer) in June of 1862 and began passenger service back on the Kennebec. The *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer) was later chartered for the Banks Expedition to New Orleans in 1862. The vessel transported troops, supplies and dispatches. Captain Collins was superintendent of the *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer) construction in 1865. The vessel was built in New York at the cost of $180,000. He took command of the *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer).

Captain Collins returned to Boston and resumed Kennebec service until 1870 on the *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer). In 1889, Captain Collins supervised the building of the *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer) and became Master of this vessel. Both steamers made trips twice a week to Boston.

Not only was Captain Collins an owner and director of the Kennebec Steamboat Company, but he was also the President of the Boothbay Steamboat Company and a director in the Merchant's Bank of Gardiner. He died on August 29, 1907 and is buried at Oak Grove Cemetery in Gardiner, Maine. His wife died on March 29, 1893 and is buried at the same cemetery.

References

1. http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com. 6 March 2012.
2. Kingsbury, Henry D. and Simeon L. Deyo, eds. *Illustrated History of Kennebec County Maine: 1625-1799-1892.* New York: H. W. Blake and Company, 1892.

3. *The Centennial of Gardiner: An Account of the Exercises at the Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Town, June 25, 1903*. Gardiner, Maine: 1903.

Scope and Content

The Captain Jason Collins papers consist of a single box of manuscript records relating to Captain Collins as a captain, engineer and co-owner of vessels. The papers are primarily vessel records for the *America* (Sidewheel steamer), *Della Collins* (Sternwheel steamer), *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Governor* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Henry S. Sanford* (Ship), *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), Kennebec Steamboat Company, *Neptune* (Screw steamer), *New England* (Sidewheel steamer), *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) and *Surpise* (Sidewheel steamer). Collection content includes official number assignment, bills of sale, correspondence, collisions, ownership, contract, ship plan, crew wages, accident reports, passes, tickets and advertising card.

Personal correspondence relates to Captain Collins and the steamboat industry. His brother, Wesley Collins, writes from aboard the *America* (Sidewheel steamer). *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer) correspondence relays orders to Captain Collins for the Banks Expedition during the Civil War. Ownership documents the joint holders of vessels including Captain Collins.

The collection captures the steamboat industry in the nineteenth century. It also records Captain Collins' responsibilities as a captain, ship owner and engineer. Additionally, the collection addresses expenses, transportation, public accessibility, connections, tourism, voyages, fares, steamboat lines, wages, repairs, steamboat company by-laws, maritime land purchases, competition and the evolution of vessels among other maritime history.

Processing Notes

The papers were already loosely organized. There is a broad range of subject matter, even though this collection is small. The arrangement of the collection was grouped into three categories: I. Personal Correspondence, II. Vessel Papers, III. Miscellaneous. Most records are vessel related. Vessel papers are alphabetized. The materials in this category follow a standardized sequence to simplify access.

Organization and Description of Series

Series I. Personal Correspondence (n.d., 1857-1869): One incoming and one outgoing letter relating to Captain Collins and the steamboat industry. Collins' writing about years of service aboard vessels.

Series II. Vessel Papers (n.d., 1836-1892): Vessel papers for the *America* (Sidewheel steamer), *Della Collins* (Sternwheel steamer), *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Governor* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger), *Henry S. Sanford* (Ship), *Kennebec* (Sidewheel steamer,

passenger), Kennebec Steamboat Company, *Neptune* (Screw steamer), *New England* (Sidewheel steamer), *Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger) and *Surprise* (Sidewheel steamer). Documents include official number assignment, bills of sale, correspondence, collisions, ownership, contract, ship plan, crew wages, accident report, tickets and advertising card. A letter is written to Captain Collins from his brother, Wesley Collins, aboard the *America* (Sidewheel steamer). Other correspondence for the *Eastern Queen* (Sidewheel steamer) gives Captain Collins orders for the Banks Expedition during the Civil War. Ship plan created by Neafie and Levy Ship and Engine Building Company, Philadelphia, PA.

Series III. Miscellaneous Maritime Papers (1836-1889, n d.): Lists of vessels, captains, engineers and connection locations for steamship voyages. Kennebec Steamboat bylaws. Assorted steamboat passes and envelopes for the Kennebec Steamboat Company. *East Boston* (Ferry), *Emeline*, ex. *Nantasket* (Side-wheel steamer), and *William Harrison* (Side-wheel steamer) passes and advertising cards. A quit claim deed bearing Jason Collins' name for property located in Richmond, Maine. A Report of Hospital Dues and Application for Inspection, blank forms.

MS-040 CAPTAIN JASON COLLINS PAPERS
Finding Aid

Box # Folder #

Series I. Personal Correspondence

1 1 n.d., 1857, 1869

Series II. Vessel Papers

2 ***America*** **(Sidewheel steamer)**
Correspondence, 1868

3 ***Della Collins*** **(Sternwheel steamer)**
Official Number Assignment, 1879

Eastern Queen **(Sidewheel steamer, passenger)**

4 Bill of Sale, 1869

5 Correspondence, n.d., 1862-1863
Captain Collins orders for the Banks Expedition during the Civil War.

6 ***Governor*** **(Sidewheel steamer, passenger)**
Correspondence, 1854
Collision with *Lady Arabella* [Schooner]

Henry S. Sanford **(Ship)**

7 Bill of Sale, 1873

8 Correspondence, collision with the *Donald McRay* [Ship], 1871

Kennebec **(Sidewheel Steamer, passenger)**

9 Ownership, n. d.

10 Contract (Copy), 1892

Committee for Health Post No. 9, Department of Maine G.A.R.

11 ***Neptune* (Screw steamer)**

Neafie and Levy Ship and Engine Building Company, Philadelphia, PA. Ship Plan. n. d.

12 ***New England* (Sidewheel steamer)**

Ownership, 1836

***Star of the East* (Sidewheel steamer, passenger)**, renamed *Sagadahoc*

13 Bill of Sale, 1869

14 Correspondence, 1891

15 Crew Wages, 1881-1882

16 Accident Report, 1882

Collision with *Edward R. Emerson* (Three-mast schooner), death of Mrs. John W. Barrett

17 Miscellaneous, ephemera (1869 Ticket, advertising cards, n.d., envelope, no contents

***Surprise* (Sidewheel steamer)**

18 Correspondence, 1854

Series III. Miscellaneous Maritime Papers

19 Vessel, Captain and Route Lists, n.d., 1836-89

20 Kennebec Steamboat Co—By-laws, n.d.
Kennebeck Steamboat Co., ephemera, n.d., 1900-1901 (8 passes, 2 envelopes)

21 Ephemera, passes—*East Boston* (Ferry), *Emeline* (Side-wheel steamer), *William Harrison* (Side-wheel steamer). Three advertising cards for the *William Harrison*.

22 Quit Claim Deed**,** Richmond, Maine, 1865

23 Blank Forms**:** Report of Hospital Dues, n.d. and Application for Inspection, n.d.